

# ECF Policy Brief

## Optimizing the integration of cycling with High-Speed Rail

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EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

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### Summary

This ECF Policy Brief analyses how cycling could be better integrated with European high-speed rail (HSR) to the mutual benefit of generating more customer-friendly services for bicycle travellers as well as increasing the numbers of high-speed railway passengers.

This comes at the back of one of the main findings of ECF's 2025 "Cyclists love trains" report: among all long-distance types of trains (IC, EC, night trains and HSR), HSR is by far the least performing rail category when it comes to accepting passengers travelling with non-dismantled bicycles.

We herewith propose several solutions on how to improve intermodal bike and HSR solutions and call upon the European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Mr Apostolos Tzitzikostas, as well as on DG MOVE, to include these proposals into its forthcoming Action Plan on High-Speed Rail.

ECF recommendations include, among other:

- Increasing, over time, the legal minimum requirement for bicycle carriage on all regional and long-distance trains in the EU from 4 to 8 per train composition;
- removing technical and regulatory barriers to retrofit bike spaces on rolling stock servicing cross-border connections;
- creating a "Single EU Bicycle Ticket" across different rail operators;
- tying EU funding to multimodal accessibility;
- prioritizing Bike-Rail Integration in TEN-T Regulation implementation processes;
- funding research and monitoring.

## 1. EU ambitions for high-speed rail (HSR)

The 2020 **Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy** COM(2020)789 set two very ambitious objectives for HSR:

- By 2030, high-speed rail traffic will double;
- By 2050, high-speed rail traffic will triple.

According to the 2021 **Action Plan boosting long-distance and cross-border passenger rail** COM/2021/810, HSR nearly doubled from 65 to 126 billion passenger kilometres between 2001 and 2018. The overall modal share of railways, again measured in passenger kilometres, however saw only a very modest increase from 6.7% to 6.9%.

Cycling was not mentioned in the 2021 Action Plan.

In the 2024 Mission Letter addressed to Commissioner Tzitzikostas, Commission President von der Leyen wrote to him:

- *I would like you to put forward a plan for an ambitious European high-speed rail network to help connect EU capitals, including through night trains, and to accelerate rail freight.*

At the same time Von der Leyen tasked the Transport Commissioner with producing a progress report on the implementation of the European Declaration on Cycling C/2024/2377, which calls in Chapter VII *Supporting multimodality and cycling tourism*, and specifically with Commitment 30 to

*“promoting and implementing multimodal solutions in urban, suburban and rural areas, as well as for long-distance trips, by creating more synergies between cycling and other modes of transport, such as enabling the transport of more bicycles on buses and trains, and providing safer and secure parking areas for bikes at stations and mobility hubs”.*

DG MOVE has since taken next steps and organized a **“Implementation Dialogue”** on HSR on 15 April 2025, announcing that the Commission “will adopt a plan to develop highspeed rail”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b05d2665-80f1-4088-824e-86181510fb15\\_en?filename=Implementation\\_Dialogue\\_high-speed\\_rail\\_conclusions.pdf](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b05d2665-80f1-4088-824e-86181510fb15_en?filename=Implementation_Dialogue_high-speed_rail_conclusions.pdf)

## 2. Recent trends and developments on bicycle and HSR integration

### 2.1 HSR is the problem child for bicycle carriage in the EU

ECF's forthcoming 2025 report "Cyclists love trains: An analysis of the bicycle friendliness of European railway operators"<sup>2</sup> will conclude that HSR are the least performing train category when it comes to providing bicycle space on rolling stock.

Among 41 operators identified operating in the EU-27 and Norway, the mean average number of bicycle spaces on long-distance trains is 5.2, whereas for HSR this is only 1.1.

Train Category	Average number of bicycle spaces per train	Carriage of non-dismantled bicycles fully prohibited by
IC, EC	6	5 out of 36 operators (13.9%)
Night-train (NT)	4	5 out of 19 operators (26.3%)
High-speed rail (HSR)	1.1	8 out of 12 operators (66.7%)
IC, EC, NT & HSR	5.2	7 out of 41 operators (17.1%)

### 2.2 Demand for bicycle carriage on (long-distance) trains is growing

Data from various rail operators is showing that demand for bike carriage on trains is steadily growing, as a response to more bike spaces being offered on trains.

#### Evolution in non-dismantled bicycles carried:

Year	NMBS/SNCB (all trains)	SNCF (IC Intercités + TGV Inoui)	Deutsche Bahn (IC, EC, ICE)	CFL (all trains)	LTG Link	ÖBB (only long-distance)
2019	251,000	57,174	393,500		25,000	
2020	n/a	60,062				
2021	390,300	92,268				
2022	424,000	117,462	570,000			
2023	451,800			247,898		206,898
2024			600,000	270,620 (+9%)	41,930	219,312 (+6%)
Evolution 2019 – 2023/2024	+80%	+162%	+52%		+68%	

<sup>2</sup> This report will be published on 10 June 2025 and will be downloadable from ECF website here:

<https://www.ecf.com/en/resources/reports-publications/>

### 2.3 EU and national regulation on passenger rights is working

Bike capacity on trains is growing. European and national regulations hence are showing their impact, although relevant provision from Art. 6.4 Regulation (EU) 2021/782 has yet to take effect starting from 7 June 2025 onwards.<sup>3</sup>

Almost all new rolling stock that EU rail companies have put into service since 2021 has been equipped with bicycle spaces.

- **CFL:** introduced new Coradia trains with space for 12 bicycles off-season, and 24 in season for the 2400 series, and 24 spaces off-season and 32 in season for the 2450 series (replacing trains with 8 spaces).
- **Comboios de Portugal:** introduced new trains (ARCO) with 8 spaces for bicycles, created more space on existing trains (2-12 spaces).
- **Deutsche Bahn** introduced 69 new ICE4 and 20 ICE3neo trains with 8 spaces for bicycles each (replacing ICE2 and 3 which provided 0 spaces).
- **HŽPP:** acquired larger number of trains equipped for bicycle carriage and removed seating in favour of bicycle spaces on old train series.
- **Iarnród Éireann:** introduced 41 new intermediate carriages for IC fleet which double the capacity for onboard bicycle carriage.
- **LTG Link:** Increased carriage capacity by 20% in 2023
- **NMBS/SNCB:** expects to increase capacity by 50% from 4,450 bike spaces in 2021 to 6,700 in 2025.
- **NS:** introduced the new ICNG trains with 12-18 spaces
- **SŽ:** introduced 52 new trains (about 50% of entire fleet) which provide 10 spaces each.
- **ZSSK:** increased carriage capacity by 66% since 2021

One exception from that positive trend was Latvian national operator, **VIVI**, entering non-HSR rolling stock into service without providing bicycle space. This omission drew significant criticism from passengers. In response, VIVI retrofitted 12 bicycle spaces to all newly introduced trains at a cost of €948,000, of which €806,000 is financed by the European Union.<sup>4</sup>

Recent announcements:

- French low-cost high-speed operator OUIGO has announced plans on 25 April 2025 for putting 12 train sets by 2030 into service with space for 8 bicycles per train set. Until now OUIGO did not accept the carriage of any non-dismantled bicycles.<sup>5</sup>
- Laggards such as Spanish national operator RENFE and Swedish SJ that so far are not offering bike spaces on any of their high-speed services have communicated to ECF intentions to improve offers for bicycle carriage in coming years.

### 2.4 Sometimes progress is slowed by technical requirements

The OUIGO Train Classique service, launched in December 2024, operates between Brussels and Paris using Belgian NMBS/SNCB's I11 coaches. These coaches, put in operation between 1995

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ecf.com/media/resources/2023/Policy\\_Brief\\_Rail\\_Passenger\\_Rights.pdf](https://www.ecf.com/media/resources/2023/Policy_Brief_Rail_Passenger_Rights.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://eng.ism.lv/article/economy/transport/31.01.2025-one-of-latvias-trains-finally-gets-bicycle-racks.a585927/?utm\\_source=ism&utm\\_medium=article-bottom&utm\\_campaign=article](https://eng.ism.lv/article/economy/transport/31.01.2025-one-of-latvias-trains-finally-gets-bicycle-racks.a585927/?utm_source=ism&utm_medium=article-bottom&utm_campaign=article)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.sncf-voyageurs.com/medias-publics/2025-04/cp-250424-ouigo-1-rame\\_.pdf](https://www.sncf-voyageurs.com/medias-publics/2025-04/cp-250424-ouigo-1-rame_.pdf)

and 1997, were reconfigured by NMBS/SNCB by removing a section of seating to create designated areas for bicycle storage.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the I11 coaches being equipped with bike spaces and having homologation for such use within Belgium, the initial operations of the OUIGO Train Classique service did not include bike carriage. This was reportedly due to the lack of homologation for the bike spaces by French railway authorities at the time of the service's commencement.

Following the initial phase, the issue of bike carriage was addressed. Currently, OUIGO Train Classique services allow passengers to bring two non-dismantled bicycles on board. From the end of 2025, this is expected to increase to 12 bicycles. This change indicates that the necessary approvals were eventually secured, enabling the accommodation of bicycles on the route.

## **2.5 Cycling tourists show high demand for public transport, which requires more offers**

In an online survey for cycling tourists in the Danube region (Danube cycling tourists survey, 2024), many respondents used public transport to reach or depart from their destination, and especially rail: 53% in total, 49% of visitors of the Danube Region. This number is higher than the share of German cycling tourists according to the ADFC Bicycle Travel Analysis (40%). 35% of all respondents also stated that they used public transport during their cycling holiday. This confirms the high demand from cycling tourists for public transport offers to access the destination and during the cycling holiday. 75% of public transport users carried their bicycle on public transport. The overall satisfaction of cycling tourists with public transport is lower than the general satisfaction with cycling holidays with 3.3 out of 5.

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<sup>6</sup> [Vijftig procent meer fietsplaatsen op stations en in de trein - RailTech.be](#)

### 3. ECF Policy Recommendations

In order to address the serious short-coming of HSR when it comes to allowing the carriage of non-dismantled bicycles, we recommend the following:

#### 1. Increase legal minimum requirement for bicycle carriage on all regional and long-distance trains in the EU from 4 to 8 per train composition

- When recasting the Rail Passenger Rights' and Obligations Regulations, increase statutory minimum number of bicycle spaces on new and renovated rolling stock from 4 to 8 per train composition, aligned with current national laws (Fr, B) and best practices (GER) in several EU Member States. ECF's Cyclists Love Trains 2025 report will show that the mean average on European and Norwegian long-distance train services today is 6 for IC and EC trains, whereas it is only 1.1 for HSR.

#### 2. Remove technical and regulatory barriers to retrofit bike spaces on rolling stock servicing cross-border connections

- The European Union Agency for Railways should explore ways how to speed up national homologation procedures for retrofitting bike spaces on rolling stock, for example
  - by extending the scope of multi-country vehicle authorizations to include interior reconfigurations such as bike spaces, or
  - by enforcing mutual recognition of small technical modifications by National Safety Agencies, or
  - by amending the TSI LOC&PAS (Technical Specifications Rolling Stock - Locomotives and Passengers) or the TSI PRM (Persons with Disabilities and with Reduced Mobility) to include mandatory specifications for bicycle spaces.

#### 3. Create a "Single EU Bicycle Ticket" across different rail operators

- As part of the forthcoming **Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation**, enable passengers with bicycles to purchase a single bicycle ticket on one platform while ensuring their rights throughout the rail journey.
  - Unified Ticketing: Allow passengers to buy one bicycle ticket for their entire journey across different rail operators.
  - Passenger Rights: Ensure that travelers are informed and supported throughout their journey. In case of delays and missed connections, allow passengers with bicycles to board the next train with spare capacity.

#### 4. Tie EU Funding to Multimodal accessibility

- Unlock additional EU funds during the 2028-2034 Multi-annual Financial Framework from Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Structural and Cohesion Funds, InvestEU to develop bike accessibility of rolling stock and railway stations.
  - Make bike-friendliness a funding criterion for rolling stock investments, including level-floor entrance and dedicated spaces for bicycles. Level-floor entrance will also benefit PRM, parents with prams, etc.

- Prioritize projects that integrate cycling parking infrastructure, in line with bike parking requirements for non-residential buildings as set by the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, as well as ramps, elevators, etc. into station upgrades.
- Establish a dedicated flagship CEF call to fund projects that improve bike-rail integration.

## 5. Prioritise Bike-Rail Integration in TEN-T Regulation implementation processes

- Make cycling a focal point in the development of core, extended core and comprehensive TEN-T corridors through bike-accessible trains and bike-friendly multimodal railway stations by 2030/2040/2050 respectively.
- Ensure the continuity and accessibility of pedestrian and cycling paths in construction and maintenance of rail infrastructure projects.<sup>7</sup>

## 6. Fund Research & Monitoring

- Encourage rail operators to extend their **service quality reports** that needed to be submitted to ERA by 30 June 2023, and every two years thereafter, to include reporting criteria related to bike carriage as well as bike sharing schemes.<sup>8</sup> The legal basis for these reports is Regulation (EU) 2021/782, Article 29(2) and ANNEX III. Annual bike statistics should include:
  - Cycle carrying capacity - the number of authorised cycle places available in a railway vehicle (passenger vehicle, rail van) when performing the service for which it is intended.
  - Cycle carrying capacity - total no of bike spaces across the entire rail fleet;
  - Cycle-kilometre offered - unit of measurement representing the movement of one cycle place available in a passenger railway vehicle when performing the services for which it is primarily intended over one kilometre.
  - Bicycle parking capacity – the number of authorised bicycle parking places available at railway stations
  - Bike hire capacity – the number of shared bicycles in rental scheme operated by the railway undertaking, if applicable.
  - Bike hire demand – the number of rentals of shared bicycles in rental scheme operated by the railway undertaking, if applicable.
- ERA to develop EU-wide guidance on best practices for integrating cycling into (high-speed) rail travel, including accessibility criteria of rolling stock as well as the quality of bike spaces and bike hooks.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ecf.com/media/resources/2024/Integrating\\_cycling\\_in\\_TEN\\_T\\_2024.pdf](https://www.ecf.com/media/resources/2024/Integrating_cycling_in_TEN_T_2024.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.era.europa.eu/library/railway-undertakings-service-quality-reports?page=1>



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